

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration and allowance of this application are requested.

By way of the amendment instructions above, many of the claims have been revised so as to address the Examiner's rejections and objections raised in the Official Action of April 8, 2003.

Reconsideration is, however, requested regarding the Examiner's continued rejection of many of the claims under 35 USC §112, second paragraph as allegedly indefinite due to the use of the preamble phrase a "product comprising". In this regard, applicants suggest that the issue with respect to such claims is one of scope of invention and not indefiniteness for the purpose of 35 USC §112, second paragraph. Specifically, while the "product" encompassed may in fact be broadly stated, such a product must necessarily have the self-cross-linked alkyl cellulose as claimed. Thus, those of even modest skill in this art would recognize the metes and bounds of such claims. Thus, withdrawal of the rejection advanced under 35 USC §112, second paragraph for such reason is in order.

It will be observed that the amendments to the previously pending claims limit the alkyl cellulose to carboxyl containing alkyl cellulose. Claims 28-50 are new and limit the high concentration aqueous solution of alkyl cellulose except for the carboxyl containing alkyl cellulose. In this regard, the upper range of 233 parts by weight of water is based on 30% of HPC1, HPC2, MC5 and MC6 in Example 6, and 40 wt.% of HPC1 and HPC2 in Example 7 of the originally filed specification. 30 wt.% aqueous solution of the alkyl cellulose corresponds to a mixture of 100 parts by weight of an alkyl cellulose and 233 parts by weight of water.

Applicants suggest that all pending claims are patentably distinguishable over the applied references of record.

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With regard to the amended pending claims 1-12 and 15-27, Applicants note that LEAVITT describes at p.354, lines 18-16 from bottom, and in TABLE V that "...these ionic derivatives have not been successfully crosslinked either with carboxymethyl cellulose alone or with mixed ether of carboxymethyl hydroxyethyl cellulose" (that is, 0.5-2 % aqueous solution of CMC and 0.5-2 % aqueous solution of CMHEC). Furthermore, LEAVITT describes at p. 352, 6 lines from bottom to p.353, line 3, "highly viscous media **do not allow** crosslinking to occur, and chain scission is the predominant reaction." (emphasis added)

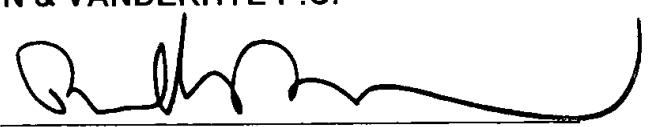
With regard to new claims 28-50 limited to high concentration aqueous solution of alkyl cellulose except for the carboxyl containing alkyl cellulose, Applicants note that LEAVITT shows in TABLE I to IV that gels were obtained in 0.1 to 15 wt.% of MC and HEC aqueous solution, but further describes at p.352, 6 lines from bottom to p.353, line 3, "highly viscous media **do not allow** crosslinking to occur, and chain scission is the predominant reaction." (emphasis added). On the contrary, in the present invention, gel can be obtain in a high concentration aqueous solution of the alkyl cellulose such as 30 wt.% or more, that is, 100 parts by weight of the alkyl cellulose and 5 to 233 parts by weight of water.

It should now be evident that the present invention is neither anticipated by, nor rendered obvious from, LEAVITT either alone or in combination with the other cited and applied secondary references of record.

Respectfully submitted,

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